



March 14, 2011

Michele Devine, Executive Director: Southeastern Regional Action Council
Vice President Connecticut Prevention Network
620 Norwich/NL TPKE Uncasville, CT 06382

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 1098-
AN ACT REGULATING THE SALE AND POSSESSION OF SYNTHETIC MARIJUANA
AND SALVIA DIVINORUM.

Chairman Senator Coleman, Chairman Representative Fox and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today in **support of Raised Bill #1098**. My name is Michele Devine and I am the Executive Director of the Southeastern Regional Action Council and Vice President of the Connecticut Prevention Network.

These two legal drugs have swept into our state over the last 2 years and have caught many unprepared. Until recently, the "Users" of these drugs have had free reign to use during school, at work, on parole or during any other situation or time of the day. Now that it has gained media coverage, the right people are asking questions and finding that we are on the verge of a serious problem. Our office has been collecting data and fielding calls on a regular basis from our community members asking for education and resources on these substances.

Let me speak first about Salvia, a hallucinogen, with similar qualities as LSD. In our recent, Regional Youth Survey (2008-2010) 4.5% of high school juniors and seniors have used Salvia. This is a little lower than National statistics of 6% of 12th graders that have used. The National Survey on Drug Use and Health, sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), for 2006 estimated that about 1.8 million persons aged 12 or older had used *Salvia divinorum* in their lifetime, of which approximately 750,000 had done so in that year. Youth ages 18-25 are 3X more likely to use salvia within a 12 month period.

Synthetic marijuana is another dangerous substance. The main ingredient of marijuana, (THC), is chemically reproduced and sprayed on any herb mixture. It affects the same receptors as the (THC) would. It is an easily accessible substitute drug.

These "designer drugs" are created to avoid current laws. The goal is to satisfy the users' demands for popular drugs that can be obtained without prescriptions or other legal constraints.

It is important to share with you how these drugs have impacted us in Southeastern CT and our work as the Regional Action Council. The RAC's are where the community turns to for help in combating and preventing substance abuse that threaten children and the health and safety of the citizens.

We have had numerous inquiries into Salvia. We know that this drug is being used on the college campuses, with Military personnel, young adults (22-28) and those individuals on parole. It is quickly gaining momentum throughout other population and communities. Students that I have spoken to in high school and college, readily admit use saying, "what is anyone going to do to me it is legal and sold at almost every convenience store."

We have incorporated awareness and education into all of our Current Drug Trend Workshops and materials. Through our efforts, School Resource Officers, high school/college health staff, college Resident Assistants and Directors and Youth Service providers have already been educated on the growing dangerous trend. We need support, at the local level, to deal with these drugs being used in the schools, and in the community.

Eighteen other states have prohibited the sale and possession of these drugs. We strongly encourage Connecticut to follow.

Because of the urgency of this matter we have attached language that we believe the Committee should incorporate into the bill that would provide that the commissioner prints notice of the intent to adopt the regulations in the Connecticut Law Journal not later than twenty days after the date of implementation ensuring that these regulations go into effect as soon as possible.

Thank you.